



IF IN DOUBT, CHILL OUT!

TEACH YOUR DOG HOW TO CHILL OUT

Teach your dog to chill out and relax when asked – no matter how excited, or active they are; and start the training from your sofa!

WWW.CONTROLTHEMEERKAT.COM





You're

IN THE RIGHT
PLACE IF...



1. you love your dog dearly but sometimes they can be just a bit too much. *They get over excited, then start to mess around and you just want them to stop!.*
2. You train them and take them out for long walks, *but they still bounce off the walls; you dont know what to do.*
3. You've tried toys and chews; *but find yourself feeling like a failure when you cant get your dog to rest at the cafe.*

Hello there!

Welcome



My name is Danielle and I'd like to welcome you to 'if in doubt; chill out'; part of the 'Control The Meerkat' collection. We all know that life happens and it's not all fairies and puppy tails; despite our best effort! Therefore, I've created 'Control the meerkat' to help **YOU** to understand **YOUR DOG** and learn all about what you can do to help them to cope, when life happens!

'If in doubt chill out' is a relaxation protocol designed by me, to help you, to teach your dog to switch off. We adore those dogs who just love life and doing things! However, as a caregiver of one of these dogs, it's difficult to get them to stop and relax, as there's stuff & things everywhere!

'If in doubt; chill out' is a technique i've used for years to help dogs to cope with being outside and then stopping. Wether this is because you stopped to talk to someone, needed a sit down, went for a picnic, or made a pub lunch stop. This is something that I also teach to my assistance dogs, so whenever they go out and they're in doubt about what to do; they just chill out!

Good luck with your training!

Danielle Beck, BSc (hons), PGDip, MSc
Clinical Animal Behaviourists & Rehabilitation Trainer
Founder of Control the Meerkat



Foundation Skills

If In Doubt; Chill Out



These skills are all based on our dogs ability to think for themselves and work out what to do. We need to support and guide them by setting up the environment and being fast with marking when they made the choice. By giving them opportunities to make the right choice, it's speeds up their learning and ability to regulate themselves. This type of training can help build confidence in anxious / fearful dogs and reduce frustration in excitable dogs, and those that get overwhelmed.

The skills are small and simple at first but with regular practise in different situations we build string, effective habits that last



Instructional videos and support is available in our online community



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What You'll Learn

01 **START FROM YOUR SEAT!**

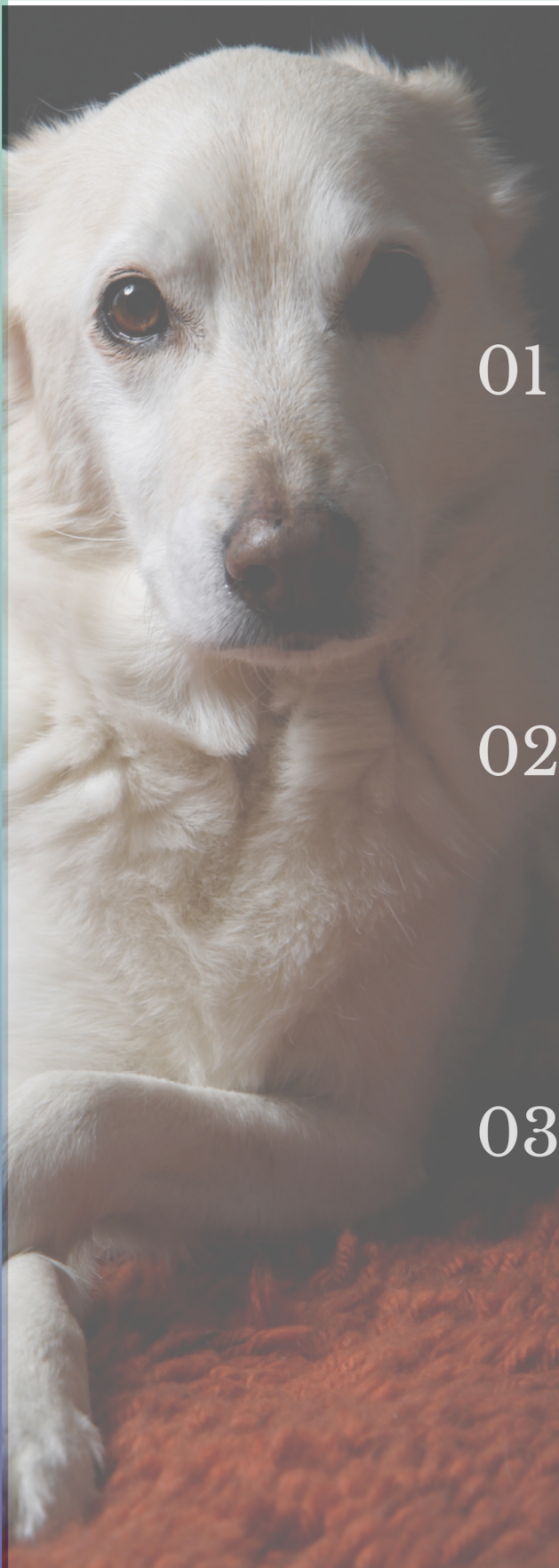
The first part of this training is from the comfort of your own seat! Yes, you get to train, as you watch tv or read a book!

02 **WIND UP, SWITCH OFF**

Now we're turning it up a notch and adding some excitement, to see how they're doing

03 **LETS GET OUTSIDE**

Now they have the hang of it; lets get them outside and practise; ready for that drink at the cafe!



If in doubt; chill out



How to teach your dog to relax

The 'chill out' cue means to calm down and relax when asked or if they're unsure what to do – no matter how excited or active they are. Waiting is boring for many dogs and the frustration is similar to the frustration we feel when we are stuck in traffic.

This exercise is different from a stay, as the main focus is on relaxing and being calm, rather than remaining rigidly in one position, ready for the next cue.

Once your dog knows how to 'chill out', you will be able to ask them to go from super excited - to calm and relaxed in a matter of minutes! The behaviour doesn't matter, as much as the emotion, as we are focusing on their breathing rate. Some dogs lie down, others sit, some stand; it's their choice; as long as they're relaxed, though most will lie down so they can nap!

TIP - A down is often the best position to start with, as the position itself aids in relaxation.

"Sometimes the smallest step in the right direction ends up being the biggest step of your life."

Start from your seat!

Know your dog

Relaxation is a frustration tolerance exercise. If your dog struggles when you start, try either giving them a chew, a food filled immobile toy, or end the session by taking your foot off the lead and try again later, maybe after a walk. We want them to work through their emotion, but not struggle too much, so let's set them up for success!

Ask your dog for a lie down, throw a treat for them to break that position, then repeat until they start to anticipate down, and freely offer it. Build up some duration and start dropping a treat when they're not looking at you. We don't want them in 'working mode'

Then sit yourself down and put your foot on their lead, and wait. They should offer the down :). The idea is to build calmness, not increase frustration.



"Don't make change too complicated. Just begin!"

Chill Out

How do I begin?

Start in a quiet area where you are going to be comfortable, with minimum distractions for a few minutes, ideally 10 minutes' minimum to start.

Put your dog on a lead, preferably a puppy line or an old one, as it may get chewed, ignore any barking or other attention seeking behaviours. If they get too stressed end the exercise, if they struggle after a few goes, talk to our team, there may be something else underlying their behaviour.

Sit down and put the middle of the lead on the floor. Put your foot firmly on the middle point of the lead, so that your dog can comfortably stand up, sit, and lie down, but cannot engage themselves in more exciting activities. Ensure the ball of your foot is on the lead, so the lead doesn't move. Now all you have to do is sit back and wait. With their options limited, your dog will probably try a number of things in

order to amuse themselves, or gain your attention. They may chew the lead (ignore!), bark at you (really ignore!). They may strain on the lead (make sure you keep that lead firmly anchored in place). This is their frustration burst, we want to keep it mild enough that they feel it, but are able to effectively work through it; they're learning to manage themselves. This should be mild frustration not distress and no longer than 2 minutes MAX.

After a few minutes you may hear a 'huff' come from your dog, and they will lie down, at this point a gentle 'good' and a soft stroke is all that is needed. If, at this point, your dog jumps up again, and starts to get excited, simply go back to ignoring them and wait some more. This is important because your dog needs to understand it's time to relax, not work, or play.

For some dogs a food treat can help, but for many it increases the frustration. We want relaxation; not the waiting in anticipation of food, which can frustrate them more. So drip feed treats to reduce frustration where needed, but ensure these are dropped when the dogs not looking and stop using them, as soon as your dog is offering relaxation.



"You are in charge of your life. Choose wisely"

Chill Out

How do i end?

When you have finished the exercise, anything from 1 minute of relaxing is a good start over a 10 minute session. Give your dog a release word, and take your foot off the lead. This will be a clear signal that the exercise is over, and their reward for being calm is to go and entertain themselves, play with you, train, continue the walk etc.

It is important that your dog is not released until they are settled; but that does not mean they should be released every time they are settled. They should think to themselves:

“I am only released when I am settled; but not every time I am settled.”

Once your dog starts to understand that your foot on the floor means **'chill out; nothing is going to happen, it's very boring and you may as well relax and sleep'** you can add a cue to the behaviour. Say the 'chill out' cue word, just before you start the exercise, so it accurately predicts the exercise, and then a cue that ends the exercise, for example 'chill out' and 'finish'.

I would recommend having a 'chill out' session twice a day, every day, for at least 2 weeks. You'll be amazed at the result! After that, you need to take your dog into another room and then practise there; then the hallway, then the garden; sometimes sat down, other times stood up.

Once the behaviour is established in the house and garden, you can then move onto the next step!!



*"Be the person
your dog thinks
you are."*

C.J. FRICK



"Petting, scratching, and cuddling a dog could be as soothing to the mind and heart as deep meditation, and almost as good for the soul as prayer."

DEAN KOONTZ



Wind up; Switch off

Moving on

Now we're getting somewhere! By now you should be able to sit in your living room and relax, with your foot on the lead, and your dog relaxed next to you, fantastic!

The next step is to see how quickly your dog can go from 'switched on' to 'switched off'. For this we need to know what excites your dog, I mean what really gets them going?

Training, playing tuggy, playing fetch?

Then list them in order of excitability on the checklist at the end of this booklet





*"Focus on
what
matters.
Forget
everything
else"*

Stuff 'n' Things

Coping when the fun ends

It's easy for most dogs to learn to relax when there's nothing else to do, but what about when they're in the middle of a game, or even a walk?

Now you've listed the things your dog enjoys doing, we're going to see if they can have a 'chill out' break, as a half time rest!

I often find training is the easier one to start with, for other dogs it could be play. Have a few repetitions of a training exercise like sit/ down or a shaping game. Or even have a couple of tries at a game, with your dog on lead. The exercise depends on your dogs excitability list and previous learning experience.

Start with the least exciting exercise for your dog. Have a few repetitions of the

exercise you have chosen, then end the game and put your foot on the lead, then wait. Once they're relaxed, wait a few minutes, then end the 'chill out' and play the game again!

Work through your list so your dog starts to understand that, your foot on the lead, means a break in the game, and the sooner they relax the faster they can get back to the game!

Watch their breathing rate, you should see it slow down, as they relax. Keep an eye out for the cheeky dogs who pretend to relax!

They will keep looking at you to make sure you can see how 'relaxed' they are. Wait them out, these are the dogs who really need to understand how to 'chill out' !



"To change your life, you need to change your priorities."



lets get outside

The end is insight

Now we're getting somewhere!! Your dog should be starting to understand the concept of 'chill out'. You should be seeing them less frustrated when your foot goes on the lead, and lying down or sitting faster each time you do.

They are starting to grasp the concept of self management, and you may find they are starting to relax even when you dont ask them too; as it's actually quite a nice thing to do!!

Time for another list!! Just like you have done, we need another list of places you like to visit and want to visit, and list them, again, in order of excitability on the checklist below! For example, it's easier to relax in an empty field with smells as a distraction, than a busy cafe, or a park full of kids and dogs.



If In Doubt; Chill Out

Practise makes pawfect

The final part is practising their 'chill out' when out on a walk, in a park, a friends house, a cafe, a pub, anywhere!!

Your dog is starting to understand that when your foot goes on that lead, it's human time and bored dog time.

Boredom is hard to cope with but our dogs are learning that skill, so when you stop instead of getting frustrated like before; we've changed their expectations and helped them to cope with that frustration and #ControlTheMeerkat!



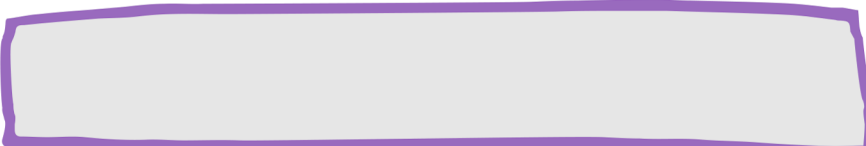
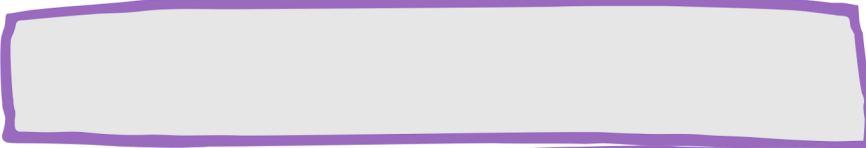




Start to work through your outside list, go on a walk then stop and put your foot on the lead - it's very useful when you are picking up poop!

Go to a quiet cafe and sit outside, then a busier one outside, then quiet inside and just keep practising so your dog understands.....

"If In Doubt; Chill Out!"

Checklist

What excites
your dog?


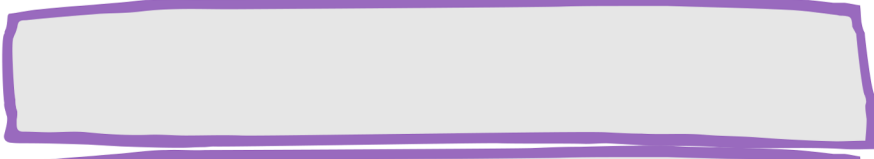


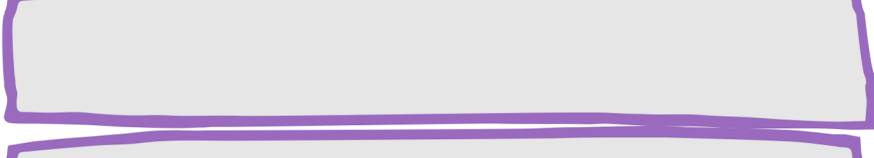

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- 

Tick the box when they can settle around it



Checklist

What places
excite your dog?

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

Tick the box when they can settle in them



Checklist

Tick off when your dog can 'chill out' at each step

STEP ONE: START FROM YOUR SEAT!

- My dog can 'chill out' in one room
- My dog can 'chill out' in different rooms and the garden

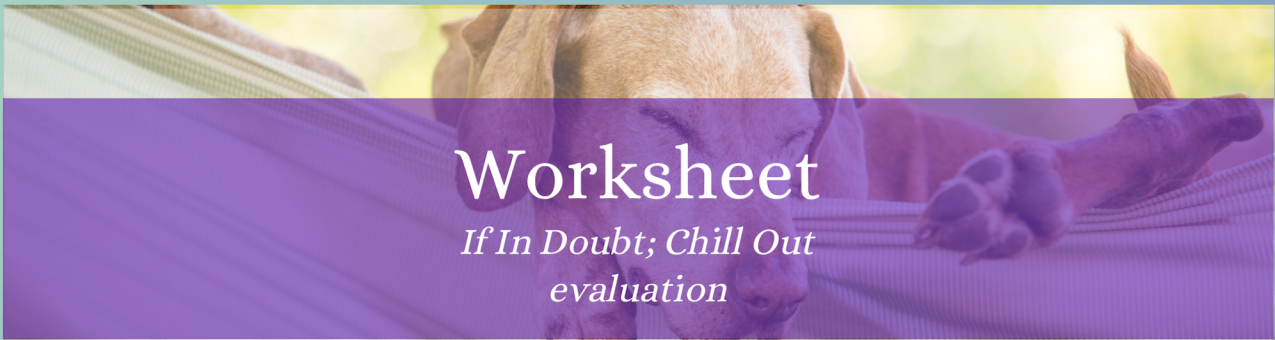
STEP TWO: WIND UP; SWITCH OFF

- My dog can engage with me then 'chill out' when taking part in the least exciting activity
- My dog can play really exciting activities , then pause for a 'chill out' break, and go back to playing

STEP THREE: LETS GET OUTSIDE

- My dog can 'chill out' when we go outside
- My dog can 'chill out' anywhere we go!!!





Worksheet

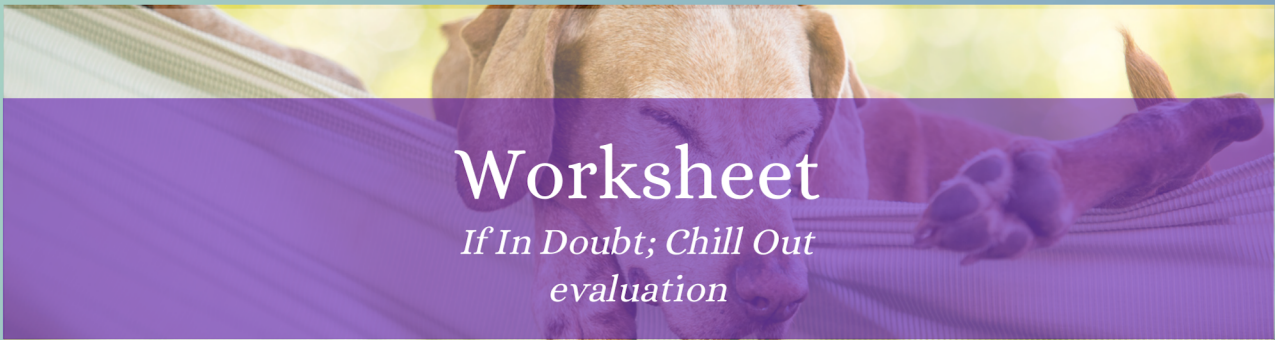
*If In Doubt; Chill Out
evaluation*

NO 1: Where are you practicing your 'chill out'?

NO 2: What was your dogs reaction, when you placed your foot on the lead?

NO 3: How long did it take for your dog to 'chill out'? we want to start at 1 minute and aim for over 10 minutes

NO 4: What can you do to make it easier or more challenging next time ?



Worksheet

*If In Doubt; Chill Out
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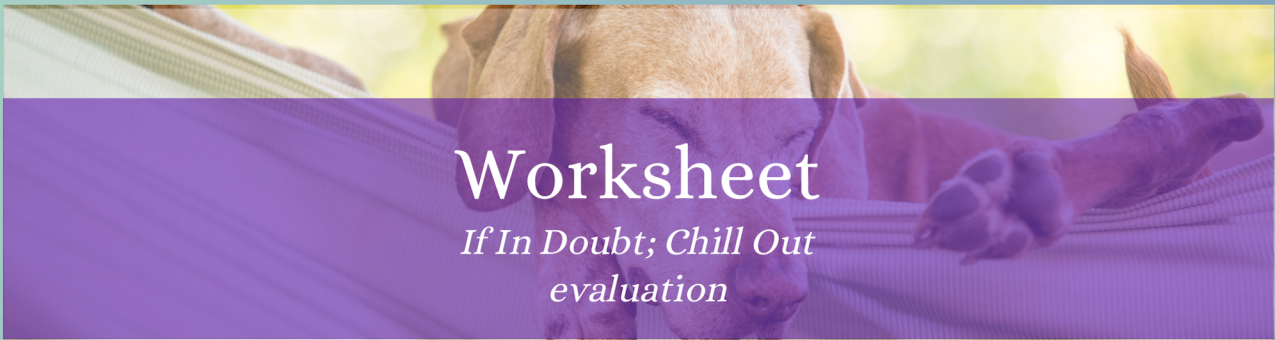
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Remember all of these foundations are self management – we're not asking them or cueing them, we're capturing what we see and like. This allows our dogs an element of control within their training to boost their confidence, and allow them to regulate themselves – exactly what we want from a well-behaved dog.



**You get the idea! Now give it a go with your dog !!
want to learn more? Join our community !
After-all, it's often the underlying emotions that
drive their unwanted behaviours.**

The Secret?



The secret to effective rehabilitation is understanding which emotions are driving your dogs behaviour. The consultation enables our Clinical Animal Behaviourists to do just this! Once we understand what is driving your dogs behaviour we can help them to cope, and set them up for success!

We start by managing the environments they're in, to prevent their Meerkat from taking over when they become too scared, frustrated, or overwhelmed. Then we help them to learn how to 'Control The Meerkat', through games, relaxation exercises, and teaching them alternative behaviours and coping skills.

We need to avoid any situations that cause your dog stress in the short term, so they are able to start to relax. So this is where we will start. Until your dog can feel safe and relax they will find it difficult to learn, and utilise their new skills.

Everything starts at home, they need a safe B.A.S.E. to start from. Then we can create that space with you and you can become their safe place. Once they can control the meerkat in safe environments we can gradually start to expand this to new situations to help them relax and control the meerkat.



Danielle Beck

Danielle Beck
Founder of
controlthameerkat.com



IT'S all about their B.A.S.E!



BONDING

SPEND TIME TOGETHER. NO NEED TO DO ANYTHING, JUST RELAX. IT MAY NOT SOUND LIKE MUCH BUT IT CAN HELP YOUR DOG FEEL CALM AND SAFE WITH YOU WITHOUT ANY PRESSURE TO DO ANYTHING.

ADVOCATE

LEARN HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR DOG WHEN A MEERKAT SUDDENLY HIJACKS THEM! GET THEM AWAY FROM THE POTENTIAL THREATS AND SAY NO TO OTHERS LOOKING TO PET OR PLAY IF NEEDED. **BE THEIR VOICE.**

SUPPORT

HELP THEM MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICES IN A SITUATION. GIVE THEM TIME AND ALLOW THEM TO BUILD CONFIDENCE IN THEIR DECISIONS.

EMPATHIZE

TRUST YOUR DOG IF THEY'RE TELLING YOU THEY ARE SCARED OR UNSURE. THEY NEED TO KNOW YOU UNDERSTAND HOW THEY FEEL.

WHEN YOUR DOG FEELS THREATENED OR OVERWHELMED THEIR BRAIN GETS EMOTIONALLY HIJACKED WE CALL THIS THEIR MEERKAT

HELP YOUR DOG CONTROL THE MEERKAT WITH A SOLID

B.A.S.E



TO BE CONTINUED...

IT'S ALL ABOUT THEIR

B.A.S.E.

CREATING SAFETY & BUILDING CONFIDENCE



BONDING

It can be difficult at times to stay connected with our reactive dogs. Everyday things happen, we struggle to leave them, walks become a chore that we now start to worry about; it's exhausting. That's ok and it's normal to feel this way, help is here! The first step is stop doing the things that you and your dog find difficult. Then start to enjoy your time together again. Spend time relaxing in the same room, capturing calmness, understanding your dogs body language, playing together with no pressure to actually do anything. Sharing space and relaxing together is a great way to bond and help your dog start their rehabilitation journey.

ADVOCATE



Our dogs need us to use our voice and actions to help them. They're not ready to make the right choices on their own, when we keep putting them in situations where they struggle, as they can panic. Their meerkat takes over and accidents can and do happen. Advocating for our dogs means to stand up for them, often to friends and family. Their walks will be different for a while, and we need to be more hands off rather than hands on. Many reactive dogs have a history of trauma; therefore pressure and suppression wont help them. We need to ask other people not to approach, keep their distance, and keep their friendly dog away. This is easier said than done but our dogs rely on use to help them in these situations and to get them out of the situation ASAP

IT'S ALL ABOUT THEIR B.A.S.E.



CREATING SAFETY & BUILDING
CONFIDENCE



SUPPORT

Although we can greatly reduce their exposure it's a sad fact of life that there will be times where it's not always possible to avoid everything that will trigger or overwhelm our dogs. A situation can't be avoided, or you get closer than you would like, and your dog will react. It's these moments our dogs really need our support to feel safe. They can't learn while they're reacting and having their handler react at them, jerk their collar/harness or shout will only affect your relationship, or make them more overwhelmed. We can support them by not making the situation worse. This is not the time for training, this is the time for distractions, comfort, or increasing distance, what ever they need to feel safe.

EMPATHIZE

Trust your dog when they're telling you they're scared, worried, or overwhelmed. Our dogs don't lie, they tell it how it is, and it's up to us to listen and show compassion. If they're tensing up their muscles, looking around constantly, holding their ears tightly back, showing the whites of their eyes, or refusing to walk, they are telling you they're not comfortable and need support. So let's put ourselves in their shoes and show some compassion, yes the scary thing could be a plastic bag, we know it's harmless - they don't. Lets not invalidate them by thinking we know what they're feeling better than they do, lets guide them and support them to safety.



Meet your Dogs Meerkats!



TO BE CONTINUED...



Meet The Meerkats?



The Meerkat is an analogy developed by Clinical Animal Behaviourist Danielle Beck, MSc, to help caregivers to understand how the brain affects your dogs behaviour. Often our dogs react so quickly we lose control, they're like a different dog and the treats just don't work. This emotional hijacking we refer to as 'The Meerkat' and we can show you how to 'Control The Meerkat' so you can train your dog.

All dogs have a meerkat hanging out on their dogs collar and is able to hijack them and take over whenever they feel threatened. Why do some dogs seem to have active meerkats and other calm? This depends entirely on your dog, their personality, genetics, development and breeding history, socialisation, their environment, any trauma they may have faced, and many more factors.

You can find out how active your dogs meerkat is by taking our Meerkat Quiz on the website!

Each Meerkat is based off the fight/flight responses available to your dog when they feel threatened. For many dogs when they are in a situation in which they feel is threatening their brain literally changes and they get hijacked by their emotional brain – their Meerkat. Each dog will have access to all Meerkats, however there is often a primary meerkat that will be the main Meerkat for your dog, and understanding which Meerkat hijacks your dog can really help boost their rehabilitations.

You can find out which alert or active meerkat hijacks your dog by taking our new quiz!

We want to take the pressure off the dog when training as we can't train our dogs until we can control the Meerkat, and often we can't do that through conventional training. That's where we're different we can help you to teach your dog how to help themselves!

Meet your dogs Meerkats

FIGHT



For most species this is a last resort, as it's very costly, but if all else fails you may be left with no choice. For many dogs with fight, they charge first and ask questions later. The best defence is a good offence. Many appear confident and some are as this technique has often been tired and tested. These dogs are not nasty and many have a false sense of confidence and bravado as shouting at everything is a reliable way to keep threats at bay,

FREEZE



These dogs are too scared to move so they freeze, hoping the threat may see they're no threat and leave. This response can be misinterpreted as calm and ok. However, their body will be very stiff, you may see lots of nose licks, small lip curls and low vibrating growls. These dogs are not 'fine' or 'calm' they are shutting down and withdrawing. They are often highly tolerant but will react if pushed, which appears to come 'out of the blue'.

FOOL



Dogs that fool are goofy by nature and often unaware if a threat is 'real'. They're often confident in situations they know and 'play up' in others. They will try to avoid conflict through play and distractions, which generally gets them into trouble. They may appear over excitable, or over friendly, they often zoom and start interacting with their environment in a fast way with little thought behind their actions. They are often seen as 'thick' or 'stubborn' when they're actually overwhelmed

Meet your dogs Meerkats

FAWN



These dogs try to calm situations to avoid threat and conflict. Often the play police in droup situations they're are often seen being over the top wiggly, often with their bellies close to the floor or rolling onto their back and repeat this. They will lick their nose / mouth, to appease the 'threat' to try to calm them and avoid punishment. They are seen as very biddable and compliant when often they're unsure and have a high need to 'people please' to avoid conflict.

FLIGHT



Avoid the threat, run away and/or hide. These dogs will try to move away, often bolting with their ears back and tight against their head, tail tucked, and panting heavily with large eyes. If they can't run, as they're on a lead or cornered they get scared and frustrated and will start to display more fight type behaviours, as they try to intimidate the threat. These dogs are often better off lead and will choose to avoid situation.

How do the meerkats affect your dog?

Take the quizzes at
Controlthemeerkat.com
to find out !



4 Step Process

01

CREATE SAFETY



For reactive dogs, especially those who are conflicted, nervous, anxious or fearful, feeling safe is essential for rehabilitation. If they don't feel safe they can't learn and they can't recall from memory. It's our responsibility to ensure they get a stress break and are then reintroduced to situations gradually, at their pace.

02

RELAXATION



For many of us relaxation is hard, we like to be doing things and struggle to switch off. This can be true for our dogs too, particularly those with anxiety or those that are easily frustrated. If they can't relax and calm themselves down in safe situations they will really struggle to control the meerkat in triggered situations.

03

BUILD CONFIDENCE



For many reactive dogs, they don't always have confidence in themselves and their own abilities. These confidence exercises can help them to feel more confident in new situations and with novel objects. By learning how to control themselves in these safe situations they are learning the skills needed for the areas they don't feel safe. Learn a new skill together like scent work, dog parkour, or some tricks. Most of all have some fun. There's more to having a dog than dog walks :)

04

FOUNDATION EXERCISES



These are key skills which we need your dog to understand and be able to do in different situations, often without asking. We want our dogs to learn how to manage themselves so they can calm themselves when they feel start to feel overwhelmed. We can support them through this

PUT IT ALL TOGETHER AND GRADUALLY TAKE ON THE WORLD



Final Thoughts

aaaaaand relax

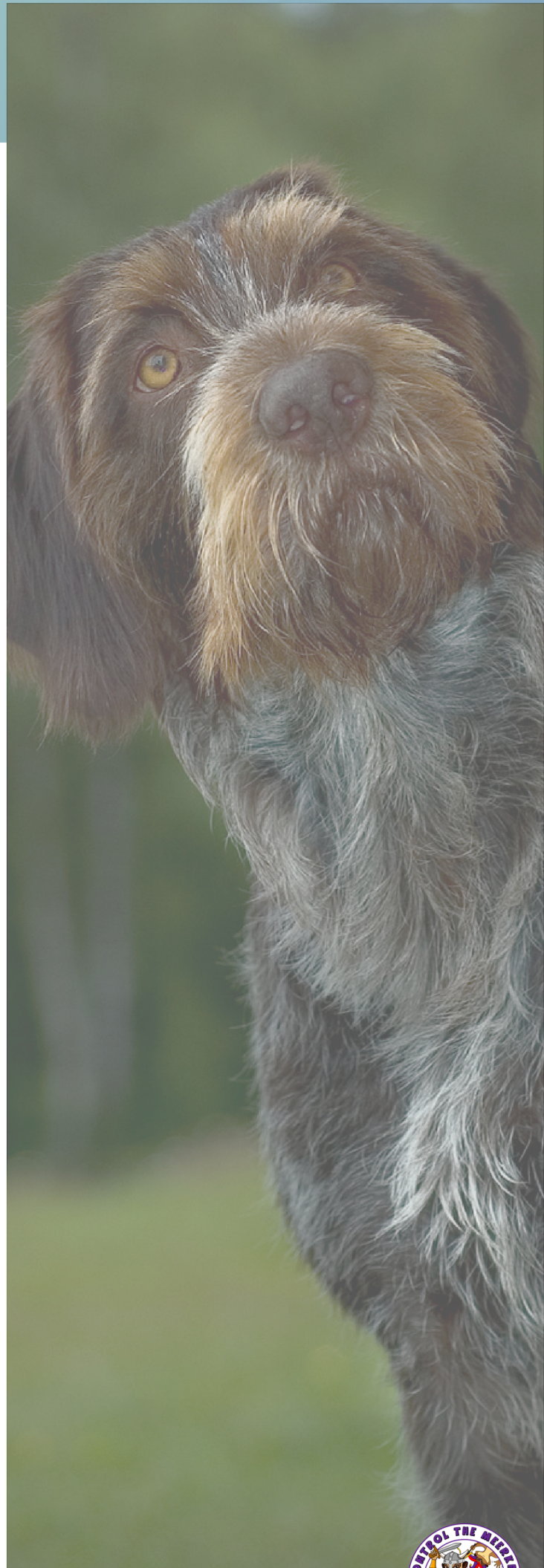
You did it, you reached the end! Your dog should be well on their way to being able to **#ControlTheMeerkat** and **'chill out'** in lots of situations rather than barking at you, chewing their lead, jumping up, and anything else they did when they were frustrated.

If you are still struggling, there may be more going on than we originally thought, and your dog may be experiencing more emotional difficulties than previously believed or even something worth discussing with your vet.

There's lots of advice and courses to try at **controlthemeerkat.com** plus a community forum where you can meet and talk to other owners with reactive dogs, and get some peer support, or book a session with Danielle or a member of the Control The Meerkat Team :)



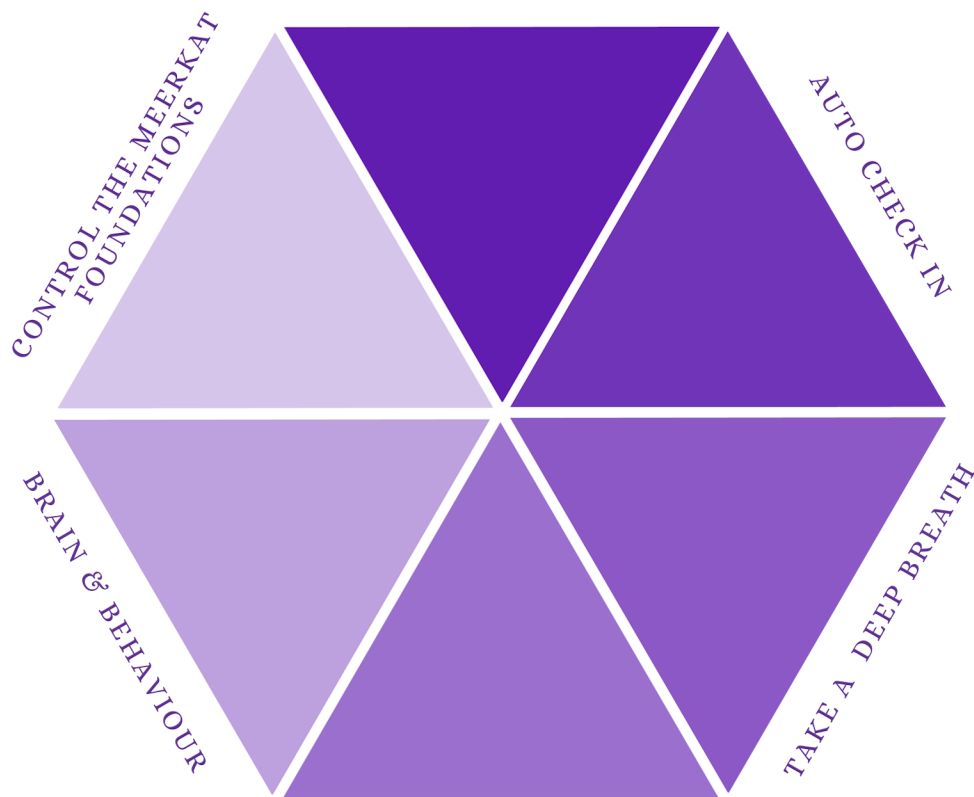
Take A JOURNEY
WITH ME →



CONTROL THE MEERKAT series



IF IN DOUBT; CHILL OUT



FOUNDATION EXERCISES

*"Sometimes the smallest step in the right direction
ends up being the biggest step of your life."*





MOVING FORWARD

Sooo, what should I do next ?

Well you've come such a long way, are you curious what else you can try with you dog? Would you like them to be more responsive? Are you still struggling and finding your dog can settle inside, but struggles outside as they are reactive on their lead? Do you just want to be able to take them out for a walk without them barking and lunging? Or be able to actually leave the house as they struggle when left or even take object off them without conflict? Then the 'Control The Meerkat' series is for you!

I love it! Who is this for exactly?

Control The Meerkat is for all people who want to understand and help the reactive dogs that share their lives. It's a community built to help owners to meet others in the same boat, and learn how to help their reactive dogs, help themselves. There are private forums, learning resources like this, instructional videos and webinars too

Sounds AMAZING! How does it work?

Simply visit the website and choose the course or membership subscription that's best for you! You can even book a consultation with A Registered Clinical Animal Behaviourist; and join our 6 or 12 month rehabilitation program.

Click here to get started: controlthemeerkat.com

Notes



MEET THE *Author*



Danielle is an enthusiastic and passionate clinical animal behaviourist, dog trainer, and mum of one. Her mission is to help and inspire dog owners to create an easier life with their dogs. She aims to help owners to understand their dogs and enable them to manage themselves; by sharing her knowledge and wisdom with the world. She currently lives in Manchester, UK, with her partner, 7 year old son, and their 3 dogs.

"Define success on your own terms, achieve it by your own rules, and build a life you're proud to live."

-Anne Sweeney

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CONTROLTHEMEERKAT.COM

I CHOOSE TO
MAKE THE
REST OF MY
LIFE THE BEST
OF MY LIFE

- LOUISE HAY



*PS. Want to take the
next step?*

**Come and join us and
over 200 other dog
owners**



**Learn how to help your dog
without all the jargon**

**Go to: controlthemeerkat.com
to learn more**





Join Our Community today
&
access to support, courses, videos and more!



APBC
ASSOCIATION OF PET
BEHAVIOUR COUNSELLORS



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